



A Dim, Shadowy Oblong Showed Beneath.

THE LAW OF THE BEACH

Drawings by George Wright

BY S. TEN EYCK BOURKE AND CHARLES FRANCIS BOURKE

"So Welsh has me sized up? He knows why I cut the flights short," he said drearily as he crossed the sand dunes to the squat shed overlooking the station, where the aeroplane was housed.

He was not surprised that they had found out, and he knew that the final break was bound to come soon. And then—the debacle! Ford realized the impossibility of explaining psychological facts to these grim men of the beach, who took no count of self interest or the first law of nature. The thought of what it meant for his young wife, sick in the little village across the bay, if he lost his scanty Government pay, was additional torture to the tortured nerves that had gone to pieces after that terrible mile-high tumble from the clouds at 'Friseo.

"You're only shook up a bit; you'll come back, old chap." That's what the other birdmen, who envied his daring, had said; but Ford knew better. That miraculous escape had left him with an abiding horror of high places, a fear of flying. Only the girl's immediate necessity had forced him into temporary employment with the Government.

For relief Ford turned mechanically to the aeroplane, preparing it for the daily search of the sea. As he busied himself with the familiar bolts and screws, an envelop dropped on the ground. It was a letter he had received that morning in Barnegat village and thrust unread into his pocket. He opened it and glanced at the heading:

THE DEEP SEA WRECKING COMPANY,
WILLIAM C. HANDY, PRES.

Billy Handy! He hadn't heard from Billy in years: not since the days of his hard luck, anyway. The note was suggestively abrupt.

DEAR JIM.—No doubt you know the latest Philippines disaster. The company is prepared to whack up for first publication and exploitation of specific Eastern material that may reach you by sea. To prevent official piracy we should be advised at once on receipt of news, that we may have our correspondent on the ground. Let me know how this strikes you.

Yours for wealth, health, and happiness,
BILLY.

So Billy was president of a wrecking company now. Well, he was always a good hand at business,—a little unscrupulous perhaps; but—A sudden suspicion brought a flush to Ford's haggard face. Why had Handy troubled to hunt him up now, just when he had taken a Government job hunting down derelicts?

"Billy's driving at some crooked work. What's the latest Philippines disaster, and what's Handy's company got to do with it?"

Baffled by the cryptic letter, he gave it up at last, and stood staring moodily seaward. There the elements were in concert with his thoughts. The wind, boring inshore, piled up long lines of spume and spindrift on the half submerged Gridiron reefs, which stretched out fanwise a rifleshoot away, like giant fingers, hungry to claw down coastwise craft. Farther to the south a single gray gull balanced inquiringly over the splintered spar of the Carbonate, an ancient sea wagon disintegrating in the maw of the Barnegat quicksands. A ghostly skeleton draped that spar, the upflung planes of a smuggling aeroplane that, through some miscalculation of the driver, had swooped down to destruction in the dark.

Grimly suggestive, the fluttering rags chilled Ford's heart. Was it a premonition of his own ultimate fate? He knew there was menace for his frail air craft—a short-winged scouting machine—in the gray gulls and other marauding sea fowl that swarmed in flocks each day at her launching, and followed the droning wreck hunter, or swooped in her path regardless of consequences in case of collision at sea. His own wrecked nerves saw death lurking everywhere.

"Maybe that would be the best way out," he said bitterly. The whole beach would soon be on to him, through Welsh. "A coward, a quitter, afraid of his precious neck!" That's what he was! A derelict hounding down derelicts!

A DEEP throated roar capped his moody reflections, as Little Welsh, the gunner, came plodding into the hangar, his weatherbeaten face eager with the news he brought.

"Orders from Headquarters," he said. "Ships Bottom's just got word by wire to watch out for the Manila Transport, she is, bound with bullion for the Philippines. Reported seen swamped, stacks down arter the big blow. Gee! She'd be a find!"

"I don't see what good she'd do us; we're Government employees," Ford said, his face paling with sudden premonition as he stared at the peajacketed little man in sou'wester and sea boots—Welsh's idea of proper "sky pilot" costume. "We couldn't claim salvage—"

"I wasn't meaning that—hang the loot!" Welsh broke in. "It's on'y she ain't ashore an' she ain't sunk; her bulkheads 'ud hold her up. She's a floatin' menace, der'lic', an' drifting in the lane o' commerce an' coastwise skipping," he said, quoting from the Service Rules. "Two double-barreled funnels with red rims she is, layin' for murder. We got to git her, if we bust that sky ship an' go squash doin' it!"

There it was again, the law of the beach that ruled the unlettered little gunner as it ruled his mates! But for that sublimated self sacrifice, the Barnegat coastguard (proverbially poor like all life savers) might be as rich as the best—or worst—of the beachcombers: they had the same opportunities. And they risked death willingly for pitiful pay, and without hope of pension. The Government was unfair,—unjust and grasping.

As the thought shaped itself, Ford had a dawning sense of what Billy Handy meant by his mysterious letter. "The Manila with bullion for the Philippines." Somehow Handy had found out the nature of his present employment. Knowing he was down and out, and realizing the tremendous advantage the derelict-hunting aeroplane gave him over sea-level searchers, Handy had brutally offered to bribe him, when he learned of this richest of the many pickings along the bleak Barnegat beach—to "whack up" for advance information of the transport's whereabouts, before the Government should locate the wreck. There would be big money in it—

Dazed, as a man in a trance, Ford mounted the ready machine, with Welsh beside him. As the aeroplane sped out over the slaty ocean, the roar of the surf on the Gridiron welled up like giant minute guns flailing the reefs. He shuddered, raging to think that he too, like the simple-minded surfmen, was daily risking death for a pittance—worse than death! And there was Aline! A mere fraction of the Manila's wealth would solve the problem, give him the chance of escape from his precarious calling, put him on his feet, a man, and make the girl a well woman. He had only to accept Handy's offer. It meant riches, safety—if he found the missing ship. Already he was weighing the chances.

I NEVER see so many gulls as the' is today," Welsh jerked out suddenly, backing a brave front. "Must be a big blow comin': they know."

The aviator glanced curiously at the little gunner. Welsh was not used to the "high flyin' business" yet, and was having his own trouble hanging with a death grip to the wire spreaders. It would not be difficult to divert his attention at the crucial moment if they should sight the Manila's two murder stacks he spoke of!

Ford chuckled—an ugly sound. A pair of yellow funnels, sticking up from the water—that was what Welsh, a boatman, accustomed to sea-level sighting, hoped to see. Ford, an aviator, knew that from the altitude of the aeroplane those two yellow funnels would appear only as black specks on the sullen surface. He had nothing to fear from Welsh's forestalling him with the swamped Manila. And the imminent storm would keep off other searchers; more particularly the U. S. S. Katahdin, the big navy ram, which was down shore somewhere hunting derelicts just as the aeroplane was doing.

"This gale'll scare off the Katy; she's a poor sea boat," Welsh said, as though divining his thought. "Likely it'll hang some hookers on the Gridiron, comin' from the east'ard," he added grimly.

"It will drive in drifters too?" Ford said in sudden panic. "There'd be no chance of finding 'em again—say twelve hours after?" It would take about that for Billy Handy's wrecking tug to come from New York.

"Mostly them kind hang round for days; if coastway craft don't find 'em?" Welsh said grimly. "On'y a big wash 'ud pile the Manila on the Gridiron, a swamped ship like her, on'y her two funnels showin'—if it was her the Morgan packet thinks she saw."

Ford's eyes glinted evilly, scanning the sea ahead,—a sea that seemed laboring to spawn forth some horror buried in its bosom. What was that? Something flickered far down below. Fish gulls, a shimmering porpoise? The twin spots were too steady for that, too evenly aligned. He looked closely, gripping the controller of the speeding aeroplane with whitened knuckles. A dim shape showed beneath the two spots, a shadowy oblong, growing plainer as the machine droned seaward. What was it Welsh said? "Her airtight bulkhead 'ud keep her afloat under sea level."

"By Jim! There she is now—seaward!" Welsh's sudden cry throttled the gurgling triumph in

WHAT I say, we ain't called on to blacklist a man for showin' the white feather, not so long as he does his duty. Leastways, not when his job's up in the air, an' his wife's sick, and him not used to the ways of the beach. Of course, if that flyin' machine skipper o' yours falls down on his job, Welshy, that's dangerous to folks that trusts him. Duty's duty; a man's life don't count against folks, nor his feelings neither."

It was the law of the beach reduced to its bare bones. Ford flinched as the booming voice reached him from the runway of the lifeboat house. It was Casco, big Jem Casco, keeper of Ships Bottom Life Saving Station, and the coastguard Captain was discussing him with little Welsh, the breeches buoy gunner.

When the Navy Department assigned Ford the week before to Ships Bottom, the Inspector of the Barnegat Bay District detailed Welsh as "sky pilot" to assist the Government aviator because of the gunner's intimate knowledge of the treacherous Barnegat shore, the worst shipping stretch on the whole Jersey coast from Sandy Hook to the Delaware capes. Ford's experimental appointment had come on the heels of a storm cycle that accounted for no less than ninety sail along ninety miles of coast,—a sail a mile!—a wholesale disaster which taxed the derelict destroyers of the navy, enriched the beachcombers, and brought fear to the hearts of coastwise skippers. In the face of the havoc the Washington authorities inaugurated the daring innovation,—an aeroplane service for charting down derelicts, that drifting menace to coastwise craft, which could be more readily and quickly discerned from a moderate altitude than from sea level; a fact that the Ships Bottom life savers admitted as sailormen who had plumbed sea depth from a ship's masthead, though they resented the "flyin' machine service" as the coastguards resent all innovations, on general principles.

THE alarm of the telephone bell in the intervening station put a period to the colloquy on the runway. Evidently there was trouble on foot; but Ford turned away, unseen and unheeding.

his throat. Ford had forgotten the gunner. For an instant his heart leaped into his mouth; but Welsh was staring oceanward, where another dim shape showed, topped by a cloud of smoke, a receding steamer.

"She's the Katahdin. Makin' for sea, the Katy is. Goin' to run out the blow," he said. "That puts it up to us, Skipper, to find that Manila steamboat afore she sinks some coaster."

Ford was not listening. The shock had paralyzed him. But he had never doubted his star from the moment he had chosen an evil one. Almost without elation he realized that he was looking down into the funnel tops of the Government transport, sunk to her superstructure. The bullion ship Manila!

But every second was a hazard of discovery by the sharp-eyed coastguard, keen on running down that "floating menace to navigation." A twist of the steering wheel threw the airship on her beam ends. Before Welsh could recover balance, the aeroplane made the abrupt half circuit, turning her back on the swamped ship, headed back to shore. The little gunner swung on Ford in spluttering wrath.

"W'at in thunder— Ye ain't goin' back, are ye?" he shouted. "Ye ain't goin' to quit scouting?"

Ford motioned to the black skyline in the east. "It'll hit us and smash us," he grated. "No aeroplane built can hold up in a gale—"

"Won't she float? Ain't she got pontoons?" Welsh raged. "Won't the boys get us? You goin' to chance that drifter ridin' out the storm—in the ship lane? Ye ain't no better'n a beachcomber! Ye ought to be fired, ye darn—coward!"

The gunner was crying mad; but Ford sat like a statue. Fire him, would they? Hoot him off the beach for a quitter? The department couldn't do it too soon. That would give him a free hand, and he would wire Billy Handy in New York as soon as he could get to the telegraph office across the bay. Once Billy's wrecking company got their hands on the Manila, the coastguard and the Government could go hang!

The aeroplane rounded up alongside the shed on the bluff. Welsh dropped from it and swung away without a word. The wind was rising to terrific volume; the wash of the surf already flooded the beach. Down at Ships Bottom station Ford glimpsed the storm flag flying—red with a black center—and the crew were running out the boat seeking higher ground. Besides the life savers, there were wild looking men wandering along the shore—

"Beachcombers—I suppose I'm in that class." He

The patrol came panting on his heels. "She's a big black liner with her bow smashed in. She's making for the Gridiron."

The next moment, in the glare of the storm lightning, they all saw her driving in on the rocks, bows down. On each side of the Gridiron the ocean flung shoreward, covering the beach man deep with a monstrous surf. It was no job for a lifeboat to try a rescue at sea, even if the big white motor could live in those racking rollers. The doomed liner was coming in too fast, as Casco saw, fetching in the gale with her.

His voice boomed out above the rend of wind and surf. "Tumble out the breeches buoy, Men! We'll meet her down shore. Lively now!"

"We ain't got a show on the beach," Welsh cried. "We got to shoot that steamboat from the flyin' machine bluff."

The broad wheeled sand wagon lay ready with breeches buoy and tackle aboard. Captain and crew sprang to the work of rescue, tailing on with roaring chorus, hauling the heavy wagon along the scant ridge of sand. Little Welsh, atop of it, calmly prepared for action, coiling ropes and loading the line gun. Before they had covered half the distance the black liner struck with a sound of rending wood and squealing iron on rock. Wind and current had her jammed tight in the Giants Fingers.

"A bully long shot she is too!" Welsh cried. "I dunno but we'll have to send the sky skipper out arter 'em."

A grim laugh followed. Ford, standing like a stone man beside the prone aeroplane, suddenly sobbed and sprang to help. A man put him rudely aside. "We don't want no quitters buttin' in," he growled. Not one of the others noticed the aviator. Only Captain Casco shot a side glance at him as he strode apart, watching the stranded liner through his glasses.

With incredible speed the life savers unlimbered the wagon, planted a sand anchor on the ridge behind the aeroplane shed, and broke out the breeches buoy cable, looping it over the roof. Welsh knelt behind the line gun on the bluff.

"I reckon this is the fust time a breeches buoy's been shooted to a sunk ship from a flyin' machine shed," the gunner said. "Wonder will the old shanty stand? All set, Cap!"

"Anchor planted! Hawser clear! Shot line coiled! Mortar pointed!" Casco capped the regulation chant. "Gun-ner, fire!"

The line went hurtling out. On the liner's slanting deck they saw the rush of wreckage and men clinging to

spray high in the air. They heard the strands of wire snapping under the strain. Then the cable parted, midway between ship and shore.

"She's took ground further out! Try it again!" said Casco's stern voice.

Again the gun exploded; the white lifeline hissed out of its coils in the box, wavering in the air like a thrashing serpent—only to fall short, with the shore end limp and trailing. "Too far!" a groan and curse went up which mingled with ominous groanings from the sea.

"Won't carry," Little Welsh cried. "An' that ship's breakin' up!" The little man sprang up beside the gun that had failed him, and stood peering into the send of the gale. "My God!" he cried passionately, "Nothin' but a flyin' machine kin get those fellows! They're gone!"

"Jump for the boat," Casco said quietly. "We'll never fetch 'em; but we'll go out trying. Duty's duty."

"It's my turn. I'm going," a voice answered him as quietly. Ford stepped forward.

THROUGH all the tumult and the fighting the aviator had stood aside, shamed, tortured, waiting, after that first repulse. Whatever the life crew thought or guessed, he knew, from the very first alarm of the wireless operator, that the wrecked liner had struck the Manila, the swamped transport that he had left floundering in the darkness—when a wireless word to the Katahdin would have put her out of power of mischief. Hoping against hope, he had watched the men at work, thrilling when they laid a path to safety, groaning when they failed. In place of the wealth, health, and happiness he bargained for, he was a pariah, with murder on his soul.

Welsh's wailing cry vitalized his brain with sudden inspiration, that and Casco's solemn words. "If you don't mind giving me a hand?" Ford said. "If you'll toss over that dead line, the thin one, I'll make a try at it. Can't do more than fail."

"You mean you'll carry the line out to her? In face o' that?" Casco swept his great arm seaward. "It'll hit again in a minute, that blow! She's only breathing, y' know."

"All the more reason to hustle." Ford dragged the nose of the aeroplane round and swung into the seat. Already the motor was whirring.

"Ye said that darn thing won't turn round in a wind. How d'ye expect to get back?" Welsh demanded incredulously.

Ford smiled. It was droll, this man who had shamed him trying to deter him from death. "Curse it! pass up the line! Do you want all those people to drown?" he snarled in sudden scorn.

For a second there was no sound but the droning motor. Then Casco strode forward with the lifeline. "I kind o' suspicioned it was in ye," the big Captain said. "If the blow don't drop ye, the line'll carry ye down. So long, Maty!" he put out his huge hand.

Ford touched it with a reckless laugh. "Duty's duty, Cap'n! Watch the line!"

WITH the brief interlude, the momentary "breathing spell" had already passed. An ominous rumble came from the sea, and a man's voice shrilled high from somewhere, shouting warnings.

"Let her go!" Ford snapped. "Don't let the line hitch!" He heard the unseen man shout again; but the rush of the gale set him gasping. "Smash and be hanged!" he gritted.

Launched into the flying scud,—into eternity, for all he knew,—he put on all the power, hoping to offset the weight of the line he carried. The squall caught him in all its fury right over the Gridiron, struck like a solid blast, and passed. After the first upward dash, the aeroplane slowed, slithering down to the sea. But the push of the wind lifted the planes far above the rocks. Beneath him he saw the dark shape of the ship, a flare streaming from her foretop.

The aeroplane, dragged at by the full length of rope, swooped over the liner amidships. Ford jerked at the line that Casco had looped over the steering wheel. A single tug sufficed to drop the leaded end, and he braced himself to meet the sudden upward rush. "I started you for Davy Jones—there's a passport for earth again!" he shouted, and whirled out to sea.

He dared not turn now; but a terrible weight was lifted from him. He did not much care now if he never got back. He felt drowsy. In the darkness he could not judge his distance from the waves—from the—heavens!

A raucous screaming roused him, and another ominous sound that chilled his blood. The power was giving out! In the rush of events he had not thought to replenish his tanks, and now— Well, now, listening to the dying motor, he knew it was all up. "I ran out the shoestring, all right; but the last race landed me!" He laughed, a reckless laugh that broke into panic gurgling.

A HUGE red eye blinked out of the east; then fiendish yells filled the air. He had a vague sense of crashing into some yielding, blinding, squalling thing. Then the aeroplane struck, with the clanging of a boiler shop at sea,—a slanting blow that slithered the airship a dozen yards ahead, and sent him sprawling, half in and

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A Slanting Blow that Slithered the Airship a Dozen Yards Ahead.

remembered Welsh's bitter taunt, the uncharted derelict lurking in the path of ships, and a shiver ran through him. "Just the same, I'm fighting for more than my life—the girl— Hang their beach law!"

He turned to enter the shed to get his few belongings; he had no intention of returning to the hangar again. It was growing dark; out beyond the Gridiron reef the sea was inky.

"Didn't come in any too soon, as it was—"

SUDDENLY he stopped, frozen in his tracks. Out of the blackness in the east a thin arc of red shot up, then another. Rockets! From Ships Bottom came the hurried voices of men and the thumping of boat gear. Ford saw the wireless operator running down from his station, a hundred yards away.

"She's the Rio liner Brazil!" he shouted. "Hit something off shore! Down by the head and washing in, she is! Passengers aboard!"

stanchions, while others swarmed up the ship's shrouds.

"They got it, Jem!" Welsh cried. "It's up to you now, Cap!"

The second doubled line spun out, with block and tackle attached; then the wire hawser moved seaward. As quickly as strong arms could haul it, it reeled off the spindle, until it lay taut across the roof of the shed, twanging like a big steel bowstring, over surf and intervening reef, a sure path of rescue, from the anchor to the liner's foretop.

The lifeline laid, a sudden silence fell. Then a hoarse cry. "The wind's gone down—the back wash'll push her out! She'll snap our line!"

With impish malice, the gale seemed to stop for a breathing spell. The wind dropped to fitful gusts. Relieved of its pressure, the banked-up sea water rolled back from the beach. They saw the receding flood strike the ship, lift her, and force her from the reef. The buoy cable sprang upward, projecting a long fringe of

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LAW OF THE BEACH

Continued from page 6

half out the water. Squalling gulls fluttered all around and above him, and dead ones clogged the dead aeroplane. But the sea seemed suddenly stilled; a ghostly column rose from below, blocking the full force of the wind. Another ghostly yellow mate towered a few yards away.

Slowly the meaning of those twin yellow funnels dawned upon him, bringing with it a superstitious thrill of terror and amazement. "The transport's stacks!" he moaned. "I struck the gulls hovering over it, and they smashed me down on the Manila's funnels! God!"

For a moment his brain whirled: his nerve came slowly back to him. He stared at the spectral funnels, the submerged superstructure of the ship. What so wonderful about it, after all? He was making a beeline seaward over the Gridiron when he first sighted the swamped steamer—he was headed in the same direction when he forgathered with her again in the darkness closer in. The gulls and the dead motor had done the rest.

But if his first situation was bad, this one was worse. A low, droning sound of many voices made him look back with startled eyes. A gunshot away lights flickered, and the splash of high-flung waters. "The wreck on the Gridiron!" He made out men going aloft on the spar, and the rattle of pulley blocks, the breeches buoy, set up and working—thank God for that!

Crossing over the ship, he had not flown so far, after all? Or was the swamped transport that held him afloat washing in? He remembered that Welsh had spoken of the strong ocean current that caught derelicts and flung them on the Gridiron. He must be in the grip of it now. The lights and the shouting grew plainer and plainer—and the red eye to seaward grew, glaring at him. What was that man shouting back on the beach, just before he took off? Something about the Katahdin. "Wiring to the Katy to come help?" He had not heeded then; but now he remembered, and in a flash the whole thing was clear to him.

"That wireless man called up the ram at sea, that's what! And she's coming back. That's her!" he said, ungrammatical, but grimly earnest. "And this lurking murderer here is making for that stranded ship, after smashing her once at sea! There's ship murder for you!"

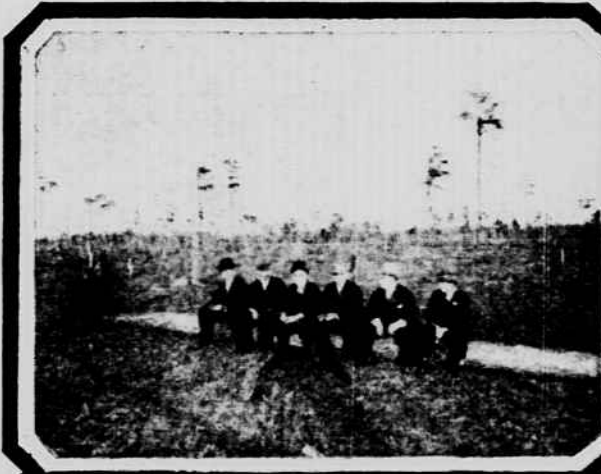
Welsh said that the deep sea current would drag ships in from a mile out and smash 'em on the Giants Fingers. He knew that now. The gap was closing terribly fast between the wallowing transport and the stranded liner. And the Katahdin was snoring in, making straight for him, almost on him. His brain whirled as he realized the trap he was in. Billy Handy and his profit-sharing plot were a forgotten fantasy. His life, not wealth, was at stake now. As the Ancient saw his lifetime in the emptying of a carafe, so Ford saw his death picture in the twinkling of an eyelash. If he hailed the ram, she would sheer off, certainly long enough to let the juggernaut Manila crash in on the stranded ship, to grind her to matchwood against the rocks. The life savers had not yet got all the crew off. If he remained silent, death was on him! He stood no chance, by boat or buoy; but the liner's crew were safe from this drifting horror. One life staked against many—the law of the beach!

FORD had not risked death in the teeth of the gale to defy that law now. Defiantly staring, he saw the ram looming over him, and he crouched low, waiting. The ram's knifelike prow slithered through the sea and struck squarely between her two yellow stacks, dividing the hulk like cutting a piece of cheese. They melted away, one to the right, the other to the left. The ram surged on.

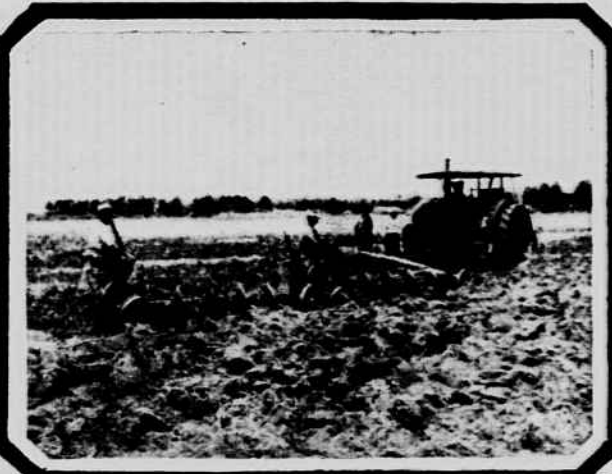
"That's done, and I'm done—what matter? I lost those folks once; but I saved 'em twice over. An' now I'm going—"

The vortex of the ship dragged him down, flailing him with the wreckage of the ruined aeroplane. The bow wave of the ram rolled over him, washing him back. Faintly he heard a man shouting, and the thumping of the ram's screw as she passed. Then something struck the sea beside him and burst into a ring of fire. Ford knew what that was—a self lighting life float which flared up on contact with the water.

He was hardly interested; the instinct of life alone made him struggle free of entangling wires. The aeroplane was a rag of wreckage, sinking, sodden, under him. He leaped for the blazing buoy, flinging his arm over it. Then a big white boat, whalebacked



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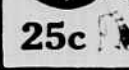
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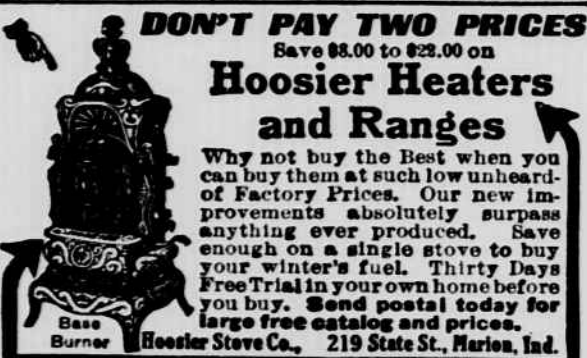
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bow and stern, stormed up in the teeth of the driving gale.

"Here he is! Here's that flyin' machine man, fell down on his job for fair! Way 'nough, Welshy!" Casco's booming voice went up. The big life Captain had seen the shipwrecked liner's people coming ashore, and had sighted the Katahdin, headed in; but he took the boat out as he had promised, this time daring death to find "that flyin' man that had wiped the eye of the whole Ships Bottom crew, by Jim!"

"You shore done your duty, Mate!" the Captain said in high glee, and the crew wagged solemn heads. "So be, you've tried the sky, an' you tried the sea; I reckon you're ready for dry land again, and the adulation o' the admirin' mob? Meaning Ships Bottom."

"Put me aboard the Katahdin first," Ford said. "We'll see after I tell the Commander where he'll find the Manila, that bullion ship, you know."

"You don't mean in the ram?" Casco cried, disappointed.

"In a diving suit," Ford said grimly. "Money gone, honor gone, all gone?" he murmured. "It's up to the Government!"

BUT Ford had reckoned better than he knew. He had double crossed the Government; but not as he first intended. Whether he deserved praise or censure was for the Life Saving Department to decide; but Ford did not regret. In the moment of launching the frail aeroplane into the darkness and gale, his old poise, the former steadiness of nerve that had carried him unscathed through his daring career in the air, had returned to him. Ford knew he had "come back," a feat achieved only by one man in ten thousand. And he bowed gratefully to the law of the beach.

NO OTHER WAY

Continued from page 12

the whole thing, hook and all, like the veriest gudgeon.

So his eyes dwelt fixedly on Clancy, and his frowning brow seemed to convey the thought, "It was you who contrived my present predicament, you little shrimp of a man! If I could wring your neck without fear of consequences, I should do it cheerfully."

And Clancy had shot back the retort, "You are feeling the lance now, my bold interloper: next time you will be impaled on it!"

Waverton suddenly abandoned the contest, and scribbled a note laboriously with his left hand, throwing it to Steingall, folded in such wise that it would carry across the table.

The chief of the bureau went through a pantomime of surprised inquiry, and, on being assured that the paper was really intended for him, opened it, and read:

No matter what the consequences to myself, I am exceedingly obliged to you personally for today's developments. Mrs. Waverton is now safe from molestation.

Steingall pursed his lips over this queer side issue; for it was passing strange that Claude Waverton should disregard his own dilemma, and pay heed only to the escape of his wife from further attentions on the part of Tearle.

Almost ostentatiously he gave the slip of paper to Clancy, who read it, and looked again at Waverton. This time he smiled, and his geniality appeared to astonish the other man considerably. But Waverton's mind was diverted from this new channel by the Coroner, who had completed his notes of Mrs. Kyrle's testimony, and now called: "Claude G. Waverton!"

"One could almost hear a pin drop in court," wrote the enthusiastic reporter. "It was noticed that Waverton moved wearily, and used his left hand to steady himself in ascending the few steps to the witness stand."

To be continued next Sunday

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